

**THE MUSTARD SEED—A SERMON FOR THE
SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER
NO. 2110**

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1889,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then said he, unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”
Luke 13:18-19.*

I SHALL not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living seed. You know also how His church is the tree that springs from Him, and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried, and so hidden away from among men—from Him, I say, there arises a multitude which no man can number.

These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters, and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable and so it is—it has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed, but its meanings are as a great tree.

But at this time of the year, Sabbath school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service more important—to overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love.

In this parable, light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the Gospel. First, *notice a very simple work*—“a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden.” Secondly, *observe what came of it*—“it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”

I. First, NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK.

The work of teaching the Gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden.

Note, first, *what the nameless man did*. “It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took.” *He took it*. That is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain and a grain of a very insignificant seed, but he did not let it lie on the shelf. He took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition. The man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed, but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with.

He was not sowing mustard over broad acres, but he was sowing “a grain of mustard seed” in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that truth distinctly in his mind’s eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it, and loves it, he will do something with it.

Beloved, first and foremost, let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things. For the truth lives as it is loved and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well.

Further, in this little parable we notice that this man *had a garden*—“Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden.” Some Christian people have no garden—no personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world—but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations, but after all, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much.

As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless each person has a mission. It is the duty of every believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday schools by millions—thank God for that! But have *you* a class of your own? All the church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every believer has his allotment and is sowing it with the seed of truth.

The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed, but in his own garden? It was near him, and dear to him, and thither he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.

Having a garden and having this seed, *the man sowed it*—and simple as this is, it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pillbox. There they are—look at them! Take that box down this day twelve months, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves. It is to be published and advocated. There is an old proverb, “Truth is mighty and will prevail.” The proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

If you put truth away and leave it without a voice, it won’t prevail. It will not even contend. When have great truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first, unpopular, and they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often, that at length the cause has commanded attention. They have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether.

Truth has been mighty and has prevailed, but yet not without the men who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it be not taught, will prevail. If revealed truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries, till Luther and his fellow reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men.

This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it round with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it—he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine! Do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the truth concerning the Lord Jesus into the children’s minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the truth, but what the truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon.

The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry, and pretty tales. No, no, the Gospel is the thought of God. In and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel itself which will grow. Take a truth, especially that great doctrine that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Savior, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great truth that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the just for the unjust—I say take these truths and set them forth to the mind and see what will come of it.

Sow the truth. Not your reflections on the truth, not your embellishments of the truth, but the truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.

These remarks of mine are very plain and trite, and yet everything depends upon the simple operation described. Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the church can do, and what the Gospel can do. We have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth. But when will they give us the Gospel itself? Brethren, we must come to the point and teach the Gospel—for this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever.

It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce, and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on. But what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence.

Sow the seed—tell the children the doctrine of the cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk about the Gospel, but the Gospel itself. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into contact with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Ghost in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus.

That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business—the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you, and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children. He is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, “Hear you what these say?” It is a lowly business altogether, but yet to the mustard seed, and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter.

The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil. The owner of the garden will never have a crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday school teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God who lived, and loved, and died—that the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Savior that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose divine working none can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Cast in mustard seed and nothing else, but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of grace, and nothing but the Gospel of grace, if you would see grace growing in the hearts of your young people.

Secondly, let us consider *what it was that the man sowed*. We have seen that he sowed. What did he sow? It was one single seed and that seed a very small one—so very, very small, that the Jews were accustomed to say, “As small as a mustard seed.” Hence the Savior speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been, absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance. And our Lord was not teaching botany, but speaking a popular parable.

Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing—believe and live! Look to Jesus dying in the sinner’s stead! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself. In fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it, and look for something more difficult of comprehension. People nowadays are like the negro who liked to hear the Scriptures “properly confounded.” Or like the other who said, “You should hear our minister dispense with the truth.”

Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns. They demand new methods. But beloved, we must not run after vain inventions. Our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We know nothing

else among adults or among children. This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow.

They sneeringly say, “What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social economics, and the sciences?” Ah, friends! if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation unto every one that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing—say, rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out!

Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute, are all nurtured by that spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. But, remember, conversions do not come by essays upon morals, but by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or science, but by the Word of the Lord, which lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth, we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for divine power in this work!

But the seed, though very small, was *a living thing*. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is, we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture.

A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction, but who has ever heard of a someone’s whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel, with all its triteness and simplicity, there is a divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five words of God’s Word than five million words of human wisdom.

Men’s words may seem to be the wiser and more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God’s Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God, from whose lips it came.

To tell the truth, a seed is *a very comprehensive thing*. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch, and every leaf, and every flower, and every seed that is to be, is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed, but it is all there.

And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows, but yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hold when you grasp the Gospel of the grace of God?

It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect, and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of, “Believe and live,” there are all the elements of eternal blessedness for men, and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God.

And for this reason it is so wonderful—it is *a divine creation*. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed, and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar.

Make us one living grain. We do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great Chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you doing? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service, and all known substances for your material, and all the world's coal beds for your fuel—get to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products, but where is the mustard seed?

This baffles the wise. They cannot make a living seed. No, and nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go further—they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvils—let them write a fifth Gospel—say the Gospel according to Peter or Andrew. Let us have it!

They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new Psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, “No, we cannot make a mustard seed.” And wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all, and He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart.

The Gospel of Sunday school teachers, that Gospel of, “Believe and live,” however people may despise it, has God-given life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God's life in it.

I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, *What was it to him?* It was *a very natural act*. He sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom they love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground.

To sow a mustard seed is *a very inexpensive act*. Only one grain of mustard—nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had—certainly it is not a rare thing—but he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure. This is one of the excellencies of Sabbath school work, that it neither exhausts the church of men nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion. It is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life, and yet what a fountain of blessing it is!

Still, it was *an act of faith*. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it, but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac—he expects it to return to him fifty-fold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad, and if you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree.

We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, “According to thy faith, be it unto you.” Believe, dear teacher, believe in the Gospel. believe in what you are doing when you tell it. Believe that great results from slender causes spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come thereof.

It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Savior has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of men had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word.

Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my friend, though you have taught the truth. Dear teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious truth in the garden of the child's mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope.

It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed—for an oak or a cedar grow much greater than a mustard tree—but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street. They swarm in every quarter. A dozen young vagabonds are before him, or say young urchins of the street. He is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not?

Yes, very. But what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary truth. Do not sneer. It is truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology. He only says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live." That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher himself is teaching the one truth in a very poor way—at least, *he* thinks so.

Ask him, when he is done, what he thinks of his own teaching and he replies, "I do not feel fit to teach." Yes, that young man's teaching is sighed over, and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the truth he imparts, and eternal results will follow—results of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to speak as to encourage my beloved friends, who have given themselves up to the Christ-like work of teaching the little ones!

II. Secondly, let us inquire, WHAT CAME OF IT?

First, "it grew." That was what the sower hoped would come of it—he placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the truth to take root and expand and grow up. Teach divine truth with earnestness and expect that the life within it will unveil its wonders.

But though the sower expected growth, he could not himself have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground, he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God's work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God's work too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power.

A very wonderful thing it is, that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God's abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden, and after a few months you go by the place, and you see streets, and a public square, and a church, and a great population. You say to yourself, "It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months." Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest.

Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels—without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of grace! See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of divine love. That a man should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God—these are all marvelous things, and yet they are going on under our eyes, and

we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such fallen creatures as we are, is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower, this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-cress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoots, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher—he or she is anxious to see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place, and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others.

An unsympathetic person cries, “Oh, I do not think anything of that child’s emotions. It is merely a passing impression—he will soon forget it.” The teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, “I don’t think much of a child’s weeping. Children’s tears lie very near the surface.” But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, “It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led.”

People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token, and are on the watch for every mark of divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text says—“It grew.” Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, “Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it. Whether it falls among the aged people, or the young—Lord, make the Gospel grow!” Pray hard for it, brethren! You cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise.

Next, having started growing, *it became a tree*. Luke says, “It waxed a great tree.” It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder—not that it became a tree—but that, being a mustard seed, it should become “a great tree.” Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spoken—“Dear boy, look to Jesus.” Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of heaven was born!

Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not all—the teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home, and pleaded with her for Christ and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesus—a holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! She becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israel, such a one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel.

What a great result from a little cause! The teacher’s words were tearfully spoken. They could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike. But they were, in God’s hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful!

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets. A teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lad’s neck. He pleaded with God for the boy and with the boy for God. That boy was converted and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom. As a father he was a guide to his household. As a man of God he was a light to all around. As a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God, his Savior in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree—a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.

But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish. But by the means of loving teaching all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice, but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder, heaven’s wide gate

has received a precious soul. “Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem” many have come who were led there from the Sunday school.

They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hark to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, but yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy, and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a soul’s taking the road to heaven or to hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a weak, but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it became a great tree.

This great tree became a shelter—“the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” Mustard in the East does grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high, but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it.

Here we have *unexpected influences*. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well and no one knows all the effects which the waters will produce on that spot.

There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all of the Ragged Schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged School Union.

When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.

How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him none can tell. Now is the day for romances—our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree—it is a very wonderful tree. But I not only see, I hear! Music! Music! The birds! The birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up—what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ, or purchase a violin, or buy some wind or stringed instrument to come at music—but here is a new plan altogether! Nebuchadnezzar had his flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now and get music in God’s own way.

Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night, trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged School, let us never cease from our hallowed service.

Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. *Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel?* If it be a seed comprehending so much within it, which will come to so much if it be properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp, and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime.

Jaded in mind and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection—what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, “So I am.” Well now, beloved teacher, next Sunday when you leave your bed and say, “I have had a hard week's work and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class,” answer yourself thus—“But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I might get tired of it—but to talk about Jesus, whom I love—why, it is a joy forever!

Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair. If there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about—the church has given it up—a great many preachers preach everything, but the living truth.

This is sad, but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself that other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregation—but I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever, if I can. I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The other brethren can attend to the odds and ends, but I will keep to Christ crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day, I would say, “Allow one poor fool to keep to preaching the Gospel.”

Beloved teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel! Don't be afraid. It has life in it and it will grow—only you bring it out and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make ourselves shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoes—he never grew any and he wondered much—“for,” said he, “I very carefully boiled them for hours.” So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it.

And lastly, *we are bound to do it.* If so much will come out of so little, we are bound to go for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation, or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed and grow a tree. Talk of Christ and save a soul—that soul saved will be a blessing for ages and a joy to God throughout eternity.

Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our body. The Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

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